

## **Assembly Bill No. 2795**

### **CHAPTER 332**

An act to amend Sections 636, 636.1, 11404, 16051.1, and 16506 of the Welfare and Institutions Code, relating to child welfare services.

[Approved by Governor August 27, 2004. Filed with Secretary of State August 30, 2004.]

#### **LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST**

AB 2795, Wolk. Child welfare services: wards of the juvenile court: case plans: family maintenance services.

(1) Under existing law, when a minor is ordered by the juvenile court to be detained, the assigned probation officer is required to take various actions, including completing a detention report, completing a case plan within 30 days of the minor's initial removal, and providing documentation relating to the minor's removal and the services to be provided to the minor. Under existing law, this documentation may be provided as a part of the probation officer's detention report or case plan, but in no case later than 30 days from the date of detention.

This bill would extend the time by which the probation officer is required to submit a case plan to 60 days from the date of the initial removal, and the time limit for the required documentation to 60 days from the date of detention.

(2) Existing law declares that the foundation and central unifying tool in child welfare services is the case plan. A written case plan is required to be completed within 30 days of the initial removal of a child or an in-person emergency response by a county welfare department.

This bill would extend the time period for completion of a written case plan to a maximum of 60 days, effective 90 days after the date that the State Department of Social Services gives counties written notice that necessary changes have been made to the Child Welfare Services Case Management System to account for the new timeframe for completion of the case plan and would make conforming changes.

(3) Existing law requires family maintenance services to be provided or arranged for by county welfare department staff, in order to maintain a child in his or her own home. Existing law identifies the categories of families to which these services are available, and provides that the services are limited to 6 months. Existing law authorizes the extension of these services for one 6-month period, if it can be shown that the objectives of the service plan can be achieved within that time.

This bill would authorize multiple 6-month extensions of family maintenance services, if it can be shown that the objectives of the service plan can be achieved within that time, and provided within the county's allocation.

*The people of the State of California do enact as follows:*

SECTION 1. Section 636 of the Welfare and Institutions Code is amended to read:

636. (a) If it appears upon the hearing that the minor has violated an order of the juvenile court or has escaped from a commitment of the juvenile court or that it is a matter of immediate and urgent necessity for the protection of the minor or reasonably necessary for the protection of the person or property of another that he or she be detained or that the minor is likely to flee to avoid the jurisdiction of the court, and that continuance in the home is contrary to the minor's welfare, the court may make its order that the minor be detained in the juvenile hall or other suitable place designated by the juvenile court for a period not to exceed 15 judicial days and shall enter said order together with its findings of fact in support thereof in the records of the court. The circumstances and gravity of the alleged offense may be considered, in conjunction with other factors, to determine whether it is a matter of immediate and urgent necessity for the protection of the minor or the person or property of another that the minor be detained.

(b) If the court finds that the criteria of Section 628.1 are applicable, the court shall place the minor on home supervision for a period not to exceed 15 judicial days, and shall enter the order together with its findings of fact in support thereof in the records of the court. If the court releases the minor on home supervision, the court may continue, modify, or augment any conditions of release previously imposed by the probation officer, or may impose new conditions on a minor released for the first time. If there are new or modified conditions, the minor shall be required to sign a written promise to obey those conditions pursuant to Section 628.1.

(c) If the probation officer is recommending that the minor be detained, the probation officer shall submit to the court documentation, as follows:

(1) Documentation that continuance in the home is contrary to the minor's welfare shall be submitted to the court as part of the detention report prepared pursuant to Section 635.

(2) Documentation that reasonable efforts were made to prevent or eliminate the need for removal of the minor from the home and documentation of the nature and results of the services provided shall be



submitted to the court either as part of the detention report prepared pursuant to Section 635, or as part of a case plan prepared pursuant to Section 636.1, but in no case later than 60 days from the date of detention.

(d) Before detaining the minor, the court shall determine whether continuance in the home is contrary to the minor's welfare and whether there are available services that would prevent the need for further detention. The court shall make that determination on a case-by-case basis and shall make reference to the documentation provided by the probation officer or other evidence relied upon in reaching its decision.

(1) If the minor can be returned to the custody of his or her parent or legal guardian at the detention hearing, through the provision of services to prevent removal, the court shall release the minor to the physical custody of his or her parent or legal guardian and order that those services shall be provided.

(2) If the minor cannot be returned to the custody of his or her parent or legal guardian at the detention hearing, the court shall state the facts upon which the detention is based. The court shall make the following findings on the record and reference the probation officer's report or other evidence relied upon to make its determinations:

(A) Whether continuance in the home of the parent or legal guardian is contrary to the minor's welfare.

(B) Whether reasonable efforts have been made to safely maintain the minor in the home of his or her parent or legal guardian and to prevent or eliminate the need for removal of the minor from his or her home. This finding shall be made at the detention hearing if possible, but in no case later than 60 days following the minor's removal from the home.

(3) If the minor cannot be returned to the custody of his or her parent or legal guardian at the detention hearing, the court shall make the following orders:

(A) The probation officer shall provide services as soon as possible which will enable the minor's parent or legal guardian to obtain such assistance as may be needed to enable the parent or guardian to effectively provide the care and control necessary for the minor to return to the home.

(B) The minor's placement and care shall be the responsibility of the probation department pending disposition or further order of the court.

(4) If the matter is set for rehearing pursuant to Section 637, or continued pursuant to Section 638, or continued for any other reason, the court shall find that the continuance of the minor in the parent's or guardian's home is contrary to the minor's welfare at the initial petition hearing or order the release of the minor from custody.



(e) Whether the minor is returned home or detained, the court shall order the minor's parent or guardian to cooperate with the probation officer in obtaining those services described in paragraph (1) or in subparagraph (A) of paragraph (3).

SEC. 2. Section 636.1 of the Welfare and Institutions Code is amended to read:

636.1. (a) When a minor is detained pursuant to Section 636 following a finding by the court that continuance in the home is contrary to the minor's welfare and the minor is at risk of entering foster care, the probation officer shall, within 60 calendar days of initial removal, or by the date of the disposition hearing, whichever occurs first, complete a case plan.

(b) If the probation officer believes that reasonable efforts by the minor, his or her parent or legal guardian, and the probation officer will enable the minor to safely return home, the case plan shall focus on those issues and activities associated with those efforts, including a description of the strengths and needs of the minor and his or her family and identification of the services that will be provided to the minor and his or her family in order to reduce or eliminate the need for the minor to be placed in foster care and make it possible for the minor to safely return to his or her home.

(c) If, based on the information available to the probation officer, the probation officer believes that foster care placement is the most appropriate disposition, the case plan shall include all the information required by Section 706.6.

SEC. 3. Section 11404 of the Welfare and Institutions Code is amended to read:

11404. (a) Except as provided in Section 11405, a child is not eligible for AFDC-FC unless responsibility for placement and care of the child is with the county welfare department or Indian tribe that entered into an agreement pursuant to Section 10553.1, the county probation department which has an agreement with the county welfare department, or a licensed public adoption agency, licensed private adoption agency or the department.

(b) In order for the child to be eligible for AFDC-FC, the agency with responsibility for the child's placement and care shall in accordance with departmental regulations:

(1) For children removed after October 1, 1983, document that it provided preplacement preventive services to the child prior to the child's placement in foster care, and document why provisions of these services were not successful in maintaining the child in his or her home, unless it is documented that these services were not provided due to:



(A) Either the voluntary relinquishment of the child by one or both parents or court action declaring a child free from the custody and control of one or both parents.

(B) The child's residence with a nonrelated legal guardian.

(2) Develop a written assessment of the reasons necessitating the child's placement in foster care and the treatment needs of the child while in foster care to be updated by the agency no less frequently than once every six months. Where the child is a parent who has a child living with him or her in the same eligible facility, the assessment shall also address the needs of his or her child.

(3) Develop a case plan for the child within a maximum of 60 days of placement.

(4) Ensure that services are provided to return the child to his or her own home or establish an alternative permanent placement for the child if return home is not possible or is inappropriate.

SEC. 4. Section 16501.1 of the Welfare and Institutions Code is amended to read:

16501.1. (a) (1) The Legislature finds and declares that the foundation and central unifying tool in child welfare services is the case plan.

(2) The Legislature further finds and declares that a case plan ensures that the child receives protection and safe and proper care and case management, and that services are provided to the child and parents or other caretakers, as appropriate, in order to improve conditions in the parent's home, to facilitate the safe return of the child to a safe home or the permanent placement of the child, and to address the needs of the child while in foster care.

(b) (1) A case plan shall be based upon the principles of this section and shall document that a preplacement assessment of the service needs of the child and family, and preplacement preventive services, have been provided, and that reasonable efforts to prevent out-of-home placement have been made.

(2) In determining the reasonable services to be offered or provided, the child's health and safety shall be the paramount concerns.

(3) Reasonable services shall be offered or provided to make it possible for a child to return to a safe home environment, unless, pursuant to subdivisions (b) and (e) of Section 361.5, the court determines that reunification services shall not be provided.

(4) If reasonable services are not ordered, or are terminated, reasonable efforts shall be made to place the child in a timely manner in accordance with the permanent plan and to complete all steps necessary to finalize the permanent placement of the child.



(c) (1) If out-of-home placement is used to attain case plan goals, the decision regarding choice of placement shall be based upon selection of a safe setting that is the least restrictive or most familylike and the most appropriate setting that is available and in close proximity to the parent's home, proximity to the child's school, consistent with the selection of the environment best suited to meet the child's special needs and best interests, or both. The selection shall consider, in order of priority, placement with relatives, tribal members, and foster family, group care, and residential treatment pursuant to Section 7950 of the Family Code.

(2) In addition to the requirements of paragraph (1), and taking into account other statutory considerations regarding placement, the selection of the most appropriate home that will meet the child's special needs and best interests shall also promote educational stability by taking into consideration proximity to the child's school attendance area.

(d) A written case plan shall be completed within a maximum of 60 days of the initial removal of the child or of the in-person response required under subdivision (f) of Section 16501 if the child has not been removed from his or her home, or by the date of the dispositional hearing pursuant to Section 358, whichever occurs first. The case plan shall be updated, as the service needs of the child and family dictate. At a minimum, the case plan shall be updated in conjunction with each status review hearing conducted pursuant to Section 366.21, and the hearing conducted pursuant to Section 366.26, but no less frequently than once every six months. Each updated case plan shall include a description of the services that have been provided to the child under the plan and an evaluation of the appropriateness and effectiveness of those services.

(1) It is the intent of the Legislature that extending the maximum time available for preparing a written case plan from 30 to 60 days will afford caseworkers time to actively engage families, and to solicit and integrate into the case plan the input of the child and the child's family, as well as the input of relatives and other interested parties.

(2) The extension of the maximum time available for preparing a written case plan from 30 to 60 days shall be effective 90 days after the date that the department gives counties written notice that necessary changes have been made to the Child Welfare Services Case Management System to account for the 60-day timeframe for preparing a written case plan.

(e) The child welfare services case plan shall be comprehensive enough to meet the juvenile court dependency proceedings requirements pursuant to Article 6 (commencing with Section 300) of Chapter 2 of Part 1 of Division 2.

(f) The case plan shall be developed as follows:



(1) The case plan shall be based upon an assessment of the circumstances that required child welfare services intervention.

(2) The case plan shall identify specific goals and the appropriateness of the planned services in meeting those goals.

(3) The case plan shall identify the original allegations of abuse or neglect, as defined in Article 2.5 (commencing with Section 11164) of Chapter 2 of Title 1 of Part 4 of the Penal Code, or the conditions cited as the basis for declaring the child a dependent of the court pursuant to Section 300, or all of these, and the other precipitating incidents that led to child welfare services intervention.

(4) The case plan shall include a description of the schedule of the social worker contacts with the child and the family or other caretakers. The frequency of these contacts shall be in accordance with regulations adopted by the State Department of Social Services. If the child has been placed in foster care out of state, the county social worker or a social worker on the staff of the social services agency in the state in which the child has been placed shall visit the child in a foster family home or the home of a relative at least every 12 months and submit a report to the court on each visit. For children in out-of-state group home facilities, visits shall be conducted at least monthly, pursuant to Section 16516.5. At least once every six months, at the time of a regularly scheduled social worker contact with the foster child, the child's social worker shall inform the child of his or her rights as a foster child, as specified in Section 16001.9. The social worker shall provide the information to the child in a manner appropriate to the age or developmental level of the child.

(5) (A) When out-of-home services are used, the frequency of contact between the natural parents or legal guardians and the child shall be specified in the case plan. The frequency of those contacts shall reflect overall case goals, and consider other principles outlined in this section.

(B) Information regarding any court-ordered visitation between the child and the natural parents or legal guardians, and the terms and conditions needed to facilitate the visits while protecting the safety of the child, shall be provided to the child's out-of-home caregiver as soon as possible after the court order is made.

(6) When out-of-home placement is made, the case plan shall include provisions for the development and maintenance of sibling relationships as specified in subdivisions (b), (c), and (d) of Section 16002. If appropriate, when siblings who are dependents of the juvenile court are not placed together, the social worker for each child, if different, shall communicate with each of the other social workers and ensure that the child's siblings are informed of significant life events that occur within their extended family. Unless it has been determined that it is





inappropriate in a particular case to keep siblings informed of significant life events that occur within the extended family, the social worker shall determine the appropriate means and setting for disclosure of this information to the child commensurate with the child's age and emotional well-being. These significant life events shall include, but shall not be limited to, the following:

(A) The death of an immediate relative.

(B) The birth of a sibling.

(C) Significant changes regarding a dependent child, unless the child objects to the sharing of the information with his or her siblings, including changes in placement, major medical or mental health diagnoses, treatments, or hospitalizations, arrests, and changes in the permanent plan.

(7) If out-of-home placement is made in a foster family home, group home or other child care institution that is either a substantial distance from the home of the child's parent or out of state, the case plan shall specify the reasons why that placement is in the best interest of the child. When an out-of-state group home placement is recommended or made, the case plan shall, in addition, specify compliance with Section 7911.1 of the Family Code.

(8) (A) If out-of-home services are used, or if parental rights have been terminated and the case plan is placement for adoption, the case plan shall include a recommendation regarding the appropriateness of unsupervised visitation between the child and any of the child's siblings. This recommendation shall include a statement regarding the child's and the siblings' willingness to participate in unsupervised visitation. If the case plan includes a recommendation for unsupervised sibling visitation, the plan shall also note that information necessary to accomplish this visitation has been provided to the child or to the child's siblings.

(B) Information regarding the schedule and frequency of the visits between the child and siblings, as well as any court-ordered terms and conditions needed to facilitate the visits while protecting the safety of the child, shall be provided to the child's out-of-home caregiver as soon as possible after the court order is made.

(9) If out-of-home services are used and the goal is reunification, the case plan shall describe the services to be provided to assist in reunification and the services to be provided concurrently to achieve legal permanency if efforts to reunify fail. The plan shall also consider the importance of developing and maintaining sibling relationships pursuant to Section 16002, and the desire and willingness of the caregiver to provide legal permanency for the child if reunification is unsuccessful.





(10) If out-of-home services are used, the child has been in care for at least 12 months, and the goal is not adoptive placement, the case plan shall include documentation of the compelling reason or reasons why termination of parental rights is not in the child's best interest. A determination completed or updated within the past 12 months by the department when it is acting as an adoption agency or by a licensed adoption agency that it is unlikely that the child will be adopted, or that one of the conditions described in paragraph (1) of subdivision (c) of Section 366.26 applies, shall be deemed a compelling reason.

(11) (A) Parents and legal guardians shall have an opportunity to review the case plan, and to sign it whenever possible, and then shall receive a copy of the plan. In any voluntary service or placement agreement, the parents or legal guardians shall be required to review and sign the case plan. Whenever possible, parents and legal guardians shall participate in the development of the case plan.

(B) Parents and legal guardians shall be advised that, pursuant to Section 1228.1 of the Evidence Code, neither their signature on the child welfare services case plan nor their acceptance of any services prescribed in the child welfare services case plan shall constitute an admission of guilt or be used as evidence against the parent or legal guardian in a court of law. However, they shall also be advised that the parent's or guardian's failure to cooperate, except for good cause, in the provision of services specified in the child welfare services case plan may be used in any hearing held pursuant to Section 366.21 or 366.22 as evidence.

(12) The case plan shall be included in the court report and shall be considered by the court at the initial hearing and each review hearing. Modifications to the case plan made during the period between review hearings need not be approved by the court if the casework supervisor for that case determines that the modifications further the goals of the plan. If out-of-home services are used with the goal of family reunification, the case plan shall consider and describe the application of subdivision (b) of Section 11203.

(13) If the case plan has as its goal for the child a permanent plan of adoption or placement in another permanent home, it shall include documentation of the steps the agency is taking to find an adoptive family or other permanent living arrangements for the child; to place the child with an adoptive family, an appropriate and willing relative, a legal guardian, or in another planned permanent living arrangement; and to finalize the adoption or legal guardianship. At a minimum, the documentation shall include child specific recruitment efforts, such as the use of state, regional, and national adoption exchanges, including electronic exchange systems, when the child has been freed for adoption.



(14) When appropriate, for a child who is 16 years of age or older, the case plan shall include a written description of the programs and services that will help the child prepare for the transition from foster care to independent living. The case plan shall be developed with the child and individuals identified as important to the child, and shall include steps the agency is taking to ensure that the child has a connection to a caring adult.

(g) If the court finds, after considering the case plan, that unsupervised sibling visitation is appropriate and has been consented to, the court shall order that the child or the child's siblings, the child's current caregiver, and the child's prospective adoptive parents, if applicable, be provided with information necessary to accomplish this visitation. This section does not require or prohibit the social worker's facilitation, transportation, or supervision of visits between the child and his or her siblings.

(h) The case plan documentation on sibling placements required under this section shall not require modification of existing case plan forms until the Child Welfare Services Case Management System is implemented on a statewide basis.

(i) When a child who is 10 years of age or older has been in out-of-home placement in a group home for six months or longer from the date the child entered foster care, the case plan shall include an identification of individuals, other than the child's siblings, who are important to the child and actions necessary to maintain the child's relationship with those individuals, provided that those relationships are in the best interest of the child. The social worker shall ask every child who is 10 years of age or older who is not placed in a group home to identify any individuals other than the child's siblings who are important to the child, and may ask any child who is younger than 10 years of age to provide that information, as appropriate. The social worker shall make efforts to identify other individuals who are important to the child, consistent with the child's best interests.

(j) The child's caregiver shall be provided a copy of a plan outlining the child's needs and services.

(k) The department, in consultation with the County Welfare Directors Association and other advocates, shall develop standards and guidelines for a model relative placement search and assessment process based on the criteria established in Section 361.3. These guidelines shall be incorporated in the training described in Section 16206. These model standards and guidelines shall be developed by March 1, 1999.

SEC. 5. Section 16506 of the Welfare and Institutions Code is amended to read:



16506. Family maintenance services shall be provided or arranged for by county welfare department staff in order to maintain the child in his or her own home. These services shall be limited to six months, and may be extended in periods of six-month increments if it can be shown that the objectives of the service plan can be achieved within the extended time periods, and provided within the county's allocation. Family maintenance services shall be available without regard to income and shall only be provided to any of the following:

(a) Families whose child or children have been adjudicated a dependent of the court under Section 300, and where the court has ordered the county welfare department to supervise while the child remains in the child's home.

(b) Families whose child is in potential danger of abuse, neglect, or exploitation, who are willing to accept services and participate in corrective efforts, and where it is safe for the child to remain in the child's home only with the provision of services.

(c) Families in which the child is in the care of a previously noncustodial parent, under the supervision of the juvenile court.

(d) Family maintenance services shall be provided to any individual and child who are referred pursuant to Section 11254 and who are not placed in foster care and who meet any of the criteria of subdivision (b) of Section 11254. The services shall be provided until the individual reaches 18 years of age.

